

RD AN No. 3646 (1980-D)
May 11, 2001

TO: State Directors
Rural Development

ATTENTION: Rural Housing Program Directors, Guaranteed Rural Housing
Specialists, Rural Development Managers, and Community
Development Managers

FROM: James C. Alsop (Signed by David J. Villano) for
Acting Administrator
Rural Housing Service

SUBJECT: Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program
Refinancing of Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loans with a
New Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan

PURPOSE/INTENDED OUTCOME:

Recent amendments to section 502(h) of the Housing Act of 1949 (Act) permit loans guaranteed under the Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program (SFHGLP) to be used for the purpose of refinancing existing Section 502 Direct and Guaranteed loans. The purpose of this Administrative Notice (AN) is to instruct field staff involved in the Guaranteed Rural Housing (GRH) loan program of the process that will be used to refinance existing GRH loans. A separate AN is being issued to address the requirements for refinancing an existing 502 Direct loan with a new GRH loan.

COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS AN:

There is no previous AN on this subject.

BACKGROUND:

The guidelines contained in this AN are being introduced and implemented at this time so that the ability to refinance with a GRH loan can be offered to our customers while

EXPIRATION DATE:
May 30, 2002

FILING INSTRUCTIONS
Preceding RD Instruction 1980-D

current interest rates are low and the lending environment is favorable for refinancing. Refinancing options in addition to those outlined in this AN will be offered at a later date following a rewrite of program regulations. This rulemaking process has been initiated, but is not expected to be completed until Fiscal Year 2002.

IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES:

In accordance with RD Instruction 1980-D and recent amendments to section 502(h) of the Act, the following summarizes the requirements for the GRH loan being refinanced:

Term

- Term of the new loan will be 30 years.

Interest Rate

- Interest rate of the new loan must be a fixed rate and cannot exceed the interest rate of the loan being refinanced. The interest rate of the new loan does not have to meet requirements established in RD Instruction 1980-D, §1980.320.
- Funded buydown accounts are not permitted.

Security

- Loan security must include the same property as the original loan. The security property must be owned and occupied by the applicants as their principal residence.

Guarantee Fee

- The guarantee fee will be 2 percent of the total principal obligation of the new loan.

Household Income

- Total adjusted income for the household cannot exceed the moderate level for the area as established in RD Instruction 1980-D, Exhibit C.

Approved GRH Lender

- An approved GRH lender must make the loan.

Loan Amount Limitations

- Maximum loan amount cannot exceed the balance of the loan being refinanced, plus the guarantee fee, and reasonable and customary closing costs, including funds necessary to establish a new tax and insurance escrow accounts.
- Subordinate financing such as home equity seconds and down payment assistance “silent” seconds cannot be included in the new loan amount. Any existing secondary financing must be subordinate to the new first lien.

- Applicants are not eligible to receive "cash out" from the refinancing transaction. However, applicants may receive reimbursement from loan proceeds at settlement for their personal funds advanced for eligible loan purposes that are part of the refinance transaction, such as an appraisal fee or credit report fee. At loan closing, a nominal amount of "cash out" to the applicants may occasionally result due to final escrow and interest calculations. This amount, if any, must be applied to a principal reduction of the new loan.
- Unpaid fees, such as late fees due the servicer, are not eligible to be included in the new loan amount.

Rural and Non-Rural Areas

- GRH refinance loans are permissible for properties in areas that have been determined to be non-rural since the existing loan was made.

Applicant Eligibility

- As part of the refinancing transaction, additional borrowers may be added to the new GRH loan or existing borrowers may be deleted from the current loan. All applicants that will be a party to the promissory note for the new loan must meet all eligibility requirements.

Processing Requirements

- The lender will process the refinancing loan package in accordance with RD Instruction 1980-D, except when provided otherwise in this AN.

Reservation of Funds

After the lender has determined that an applicant will likely qualify for a guaranteed refinance loan, the lender or originator should request a reservation of funds to ensure that funds will be available at the time the loan is ready for final loan approval. Field staff will reserve funds upon receipt of Form RD 1980-86, "Request for Reservation of Funds" from the lender, and funds will remain reserved for 60 days. The reservation screen of the Guaranteed Loan System will eventually include a new field that will identify the loan as a refinance. This system enhancement is scheduled to be completed within the next 60 days. GRH refinance loans may be reserved prior to system enhancements using the existing reservation system.

Loan Application Documentation

Application and verification requirements of RD Instruction 1980-D, §1980.353(c) and (e) apply, except for that portion of paragraph (c)(4) that deals with maximum interest rate and paragraph (c)(16) (purchase agreement). The following items must be addressed

or documented in the lender's loan file in order for the application to be considered complete:

- Signed copy of the final loan application.
- Current credit report.
- Any late mortgage payments within the past 36 months on the existing GRH loan must be addressed by the lender and taken into consideration in the underwriting decision.
- Lender verification of applicant's current employment and income.
- Lender verification that the total adjusted income for the household does not exceed the current moderate income level established for the area.
- Lender's underwriting analysis, including applicant's qualifying ratios for the loan being refinanced. Ratios must meet requirements as stated in RD Instruction 1980-D, §1980.345(c)(3). The monthly housing expense to income ratio may not exceed 29 percent and the total debt to income ratio may not exceed 41 percent. However, lenders may request a waiver of these ratio requirements with documentation of acceptable compensating factors. A satisfactory payment history for the existing mortgage is considered a strong compensating factor.
- Applicants to sign all applicable RD forms including Form RD 1980-21, "Request for Single Family Housing Loan Guarantee" and Form AD-1048 "Debarment Certification".
- Notwithstanding RD Instruction 1980-D, §1980.334 requirements, a complete Uniform Residential Appraisal Report (URAR) will be required only in cases when any accrued interest, closing costs and/or fees (other than the 2% Guarantee fee) will be financed into the loan.
- No Property inspections or thermal certification are necessary. Although RHS does not require repairs to be completed for refinance transactions, the lender may require completion of repairs as a condition of loan approval. Expenses related to property inspections and repairs may not be financed into the new loan amount.

Submission Process

Once the lender has obtained all required documentation and completed underwriting and approval of the loan, the lender will submit the loan application package for Agency review. The Agency will review applications to determine that all program requirements have been met.

Use of GRH funds for the sole purpose of refinancing an existing GRH loan is considered a servicing action and a categorical exclusion under RD Instruction 1940-G, §1940.310(e)(2). Completion of RD Form 1940-22, "Categorical Exclusion Checklist," will not be required.

Following RHS approval, funds will be obligated and a Conditional Commitment issued.

Closing Costs and Lender Fees

As stated in RD Instruction 1980-D, §1980.324(a), the lender may establish charges and fees for the refinance loan, provided they are the same as those they charge other applicants for similar types of transactions. Lenders and the Agency should make every effort to ensure that applicants are not being charged excessive fees as part of the new loan. At this time, discount points are not eligible to be financed, except for low-income applicants. In such cases, discount points financed will not exceed two percentage points of the loan amount.

Financing of Guarantee Fee

The 2 percent guarantee fee may be financed into any GRH refinancing transaction. As usual, applicants may finance closing costs and fees up to 100 percent of the current appraised value. However, it is possible that the loan-to-value (LTV) of the new loan could reach 102% if the 2 percent guarantee fee is financed. Loans may exceed 100 percent LTV only to the extent that the excess represents a financed guarantee fee of no more than 2 percent. This provision applies only to GRH refinancing transactions.

Loan Note Guarantee Issuance Requirements

Once the lender has closed the loan, closing documentation should be submitted to the Agency in accordance with RD Instruction 1980-D, §1980.361(a). Provided that the lender's loan closing documentation is adequate, a Loan Note Guarantee will be issued to cover the terms of the new loan. The Agency will process loan closings for GRH refinance loans using the same procedures used for GRH purchase loans. Once the Agency's loan closing has processed and the new Loan Note Guarantee has been issued, the Finance Office should be notified to terminate the original guarantee due to the loan being refinanced through the GRH program. Notifications should be made to Finance Office, Guaranteed Loan Branch, Attn: FC-350 or by Fax at 314-539-3110.

Guaranteed Loan System (GLS) Reporting

All GRH refinance loans will be coded with assistance code **“096”**, the same code currently used for GRH purchase loans. This coding will permit funds to be obligated from one funding source through the remainder of the fiscal year.

For tracking and data retrieval purposes, there will eventually be approximately four to five field changes or field additions to the application screens contained within GLS that must be completed as part of the refinance obligation process. These fields will identify the new loan as a refinance loan, whether the loan being paid off is a direct or guaranteed loan, and whether or not an appraisal is required. Until these system enhancements are completed, field staff are requested to manually track the name, case number, and loan amount of all existing GRH loans being refinanced with a new GRH loan.

Funding Limitations

There will be no limit placed on the number of refinance loans made from the allocation at this time. However, overall funding availability will be monitored closely throughout the remainder of FY 2001 to ensure that ample funds will be available for both purchase and refinance loans.

SUMMARY:

The intent of the new refinance feature of the GRH loan program is to give existing GRH borrowers with satisfactory payment histories the opportunity to benefit from a lower interest rate and increase their ability to be successful homeowners. Applicants must meet all existing eligibility requirements as stated in RD Instruction 1980-D.

The Agency should give applicants with existing GRH loans that are in good standing every consideration when applying for a GRH refinance loan. GRH refinance loans may not be used as a loss mitigation measure for loans that are presently not performing or for borrowers who are not remaining current on their existing GRH loan. Delinquent GRH loans should be reviewed and evaluated using the loan servicing guidelines currently outlined in RD Instruction 1980-D, §1980.370.

Questions regarding this AN may be directed to the Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Division (SFHGLD) at (202) 720-1452.